A guide to damp, condensation & mould



Cernach
Housing Association

What is dampness?

Sometimes you hear people say a building is damp - what does this mean? how can it be addressed?

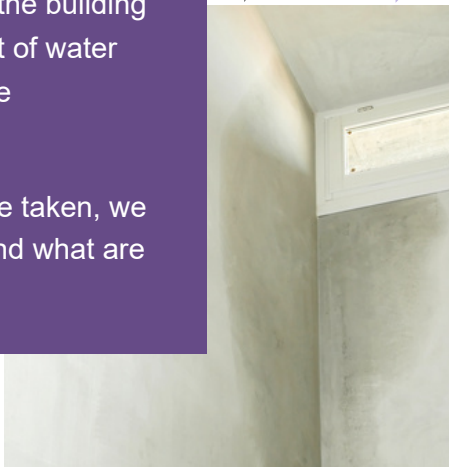
There are four main causes of dampness:

Condensation	Traumatic Damp
• Inadequate ventilation • Cold bridging • Poor insulation • Inadequate heating	• Leaks • Burst pipes • Flooding
Penetrating Damp	**Rising Damp**
• Roof defects • Faulty gutters and downpipes • Defective masonry • Defective window installations	• Defective damp-proof courses • Ground level issues

As well as the four big areas, spillage and pipe leakage also cause damp.

All buildings will have a level of water present in the building material which is completely natural. The amount of water depends on the material used and humidity of the surrounding area.

Before we can determine what action needs to be taken, we need to determine what type of dampness it is and what are the root causes.



What is condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear, which is the ‘dew point’. In other words, condensation forms as warm, vapour-laden air meets a cold surface. It can form on areas such as windows, mirrors, walls and tiling.

As the air cools, it cannot retain moisture, and some of it condenses into small droplets of water on cold surfaces. You can see this happening in your home on the bathroom mirror, cistern when the room is steamed up from the hot water of running a bath or shower, moisture on windows when drying clothes indoors, or the kitchen windows steamed up when cooking.

Condensation often forms on north-facing walls due to lack of natural heat from sunlight. Condensation can be associated with poor heating and ventilation in buildings. It is more apparent in winter, as the external air temperature is low, and walls and windows are cold.



How condensation happens

1. Cold air enters the building
2. The air is warmed
3. The warm air takes up moisture
4. The warm, moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces (walls and windows) and is cooled below its dew point
5. Condensation occurs as the excess moisture is released

What causes condensation?

Every day the UK's average household puts up to 12 litres of moisture into the air in their homes, through normal activities such as cooking, washing clothes and bathing. Here are some daily activities and the amount of water vapour they can produce:

Cooking	Up to 3 litres per day
Clothes washing	0.5 litres per wash
Showers and baths	1.5 litres per person
Washing dishes	Up to 1 litre per day
Un-vented clothes drying	5 litres per load
Breathing, active adult	0.2 litres an hour per person
Breathing, adult asleep	0.02 litres an hour per person

Houseplants and pets also contribute to water moisture in the air and condensation.

Where can you find condensation?

Condensation doesn't just form on windows; it can form on any cold surface. Especially in areas where moisture can become trapped. This can include windows that have blinds or curtains, behind large furniture against a cold wall or inside a fitted wardrobe.

The most common cause of mould is condensation.

Condensation is commonly found on or around windows, and can often be found behind large objects such as beds and wardrobes. These are areas that do not get much ventilation, especially when up against an external wall. To get rid of this mould, you first have to get rid of the excess moisture.

What is mould?

Mould is a fungus that requires high levels of moisture to survive. Mould spores exist in the atmosphere and are invisible to the human eye. They only become visible when they rest on a surface, where they can grow and multiply if left untreated. Depending upon the type of mould, the appearance varies. Black mould is very common in homes that have high levels of condensation. For mould to be able to germinate on a surface, it requires the surface to be wet with condensation.





Problems caused by condensation

Water running down windows and walls is perhaps the most immediate indication of a condensation problem. If ignored, this can lead to a deterioration in the decorative condition of the property, stained curtains, decay in window frames and appear on the surface of wallpaper and paint. Condensation can also occur under suspended floors and in roof voids.

Usually, condensation disperses fairly quickly and does not cause more than minor inconvenience, but in homes which are poorly heated or inadequately ventilated, condensation can be serious and persistent, and leads to growth of mould.

Where there is a lack of ventilation and humidity levels remain high in the property, mould will be able to grow. Mould typically grows on surfaces that have become damp due to high humidity levels in the property. Because windows and corners tend to be the coolest areas in a home, condensation is often found on or near those areas. In order to prevent condensation issues, it is important to keep a dry home, ensuring circulation of damp air caused by cooking, showering and drying clothes.

What does condensation look like?



What to do if you have mould in your home

We take reports of damp, condensation and mould very seriously.

You should report repairs relating to damp, condensation and mould to the Association as soon as you notice them, reporting the issues early help us investigate the cause and take the right action.

What you can expect from Cernach

Within 10 working days of receiving a report	→	An investigation by a member of our Maintenance team
Within 3 working days of the investigation	→	A written summary of the investigation findings
Within 5 working days of the investigation concluding	→	Any repairs or required works to have started

If you see early stages of mould, its good to clean it off straight away to minimise any health risk, but we also need to fix the underlying case of the damp to stop it coming back. If you don't have any leaks or rising damp issues, then the problem is most likely condensation.

When cleaning mould it is important that you use a suitable fungicidal product, following the manufacturer's instructions. Ventilate the room, wear appropriate protective equipment and never mix cleaning products.

Avoid brushing, dusting or vacuuming dry mould as this can cause the mould to spread to other areas and release spores into the air. You should also clean affected soft furnishings or carpets thoroughly.

What is...?

1

Rain Penetration

This occurs when water penetrates the walls of a property through an external defect such as missing pointing on brickwork, a loose roof tile, cracked render, a blocked gutter, a leaking water pipe, seals failing around a window and existing cold bridge or spalled brickwork.

This type of dampness is usually more noticeable after it has rained and you will normally see a damp patch on the wall or ceiling that feels damp to touch.

1





2

2

Rising Damp

This occurs when water rises from the ground into the walls of a building though capillary suction of brick or stone. Water breaks through and around a broken damp proof course and rises into the wall through the porous mortar and masonry used.

This type of damp only affects ground floor rooms and basements. Rising damp will usually rise up a wall to almost one meter, after which the sheer wright of the water and the effect if gravity prevents it rising further. Rising damp will usually leave a tide mark on the wall. You may also notice salt crystals on affected areas of the interior part of the external walls, which looks like a white powder on the wall.

Other sources of damp

3 Other possible sources can fall under areas of spillage and pipe leakage.

Kids splashing about in the bath or religious bathing can cause spillage in the property. Other types of damp can be caused by a defective pipe caused by a leak from the toilet, shower or sink. It can show up on floors if the leak is from a water piper under the floor or a leak in a radiator pipe. It will appear as an obvious damp patch, regardless of what the weather is like outside.





What can you do?

1. Keep your home well-ventilated by opening your windows and internal doors daily to allow fresh air into the room and move out stale moist air. This helps create a much healthier environment and helps to get rid of humidity.

2. Keep trickle vents open to allow airflow throughout the property. Air ventilation stops moist air becoming trapped.

3. Wipe down walls and windows regularly as well as any wet surfaces in the kitchen and bathroom.

4. Make sure your home is adequately heated. All rooms should have a low level of heat throughout the day. This is important during winter because it is the cold air which meets the warm air and releases the moisture. If the air is all the same temperature, then this can't happen.

5. Keep internal doors closed especially when cooking and bathing so moisture doesn't move throughout the rest of your home.







6. Avoid placing furniture directly against walls. Leaving a small gap allows air to circulate and helps prevent mould growth.

7. Ensure cupboards, wardrobes and storage areas are not overfilled to allow airflow.

8. When filling your bath, run cold water first and then the hot, this will reduce the amount of steam (which leads to condensation) by 90%.

9. Use extractor fans whenever cooking, bathing, or showering, and leave them running for at least 15 to 20 minutes afterwards.

10. When drying clothes inside your home make sure to open windows. It is best to dry your clothes outside as this reduces moisture build up.

11. Avoid using gas or paraffin heaters as they produce high levels of moisture.







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Please remember – if you have any concerns about damp in your home, report it to us as soon as you are aware of it.

Reporting concerns means we can inspect and check what is causing the issues so it can be dealt with appropriately.

You will not be able to deal with issues of rising damp, penetrating damp and pipe leakage - Cernach will deal with these.

Most condensation issues can be dealt with by implementing the recommendations in this booklet, however, it would still be best to let us know about any concerns so we can offer you advice and assistance.

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